

## Facsimiles and the Antiquarian Trade

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THE PRACTICE OF MAKING FACSIMILES of original texts extends into antiquity. The Alexandrians begged and borrowed texts from every possible source; but they also stole, for they realized that no copy can ever fully replace the original. Ptolemy III was so suspicious of facsimiles that he forfeited a substantial deposit to the Athenians when he appropriated the official texts of the three great tragedians. Thus Callimachus and his colleagues set the keynote for modern scholarly libraries: use any possible device to acquire an original text; but when the original is unavailable, get the best copy that can be made.

In subsequent centuries the great bookmen such as Atticus, Hrabanus Maurus, or Manutius made copies of original texts according to the best devices at their disposal, always yearning for the original, and making their copies resemble the original as closely as possible. The first modern collection of palaeographical models was probably the engraved *Prova centum scripturarum* (1517) of Leonhard Wagner (Wirstlin).<sup>1</sup> The first complete manuscript issued in facsimile was the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* from Echternach, which Baltasar Moretus engraved in copper for P. Rosweyde in 1626-33.<sup>2</sup> But it was not until the turn of the nineteenth century that the absolutely faithful reproduction of original texts became possible with the inventions of Alois Senefelder. To the present day offset printing in its various forms remains the cheapest and typographically clearest medium for full-size facsimile reproduction.

Bookmen immediately seized upon lithography as an answer to the problem of making rare texts more generally available. In 1808 the first incunable was reproduced by lithography in J. Christ's *Über die frühesten universalhistorischen Folgen der Erfindung der Buchdruckerkunst*. Thus the *Mahnung wider die Türcken* (Mainz, Printer of B-36, ca. 1454; Hain 10,741) becomes a sort of an *incunabulum bis*,

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for it was the first of approximately a hundred fifteenth-century imprints (except other broadsides) to be reproduced by offset between 1808 and 1924.<sup>3</sup>

The history of photography and its micro-applications is well known. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries photographic techniques of all sorts were used for the reproduction of rare printed books and manuscripts. In the early twenties there was the quixotic and fantastically expensive job of reproducing *The Kentucke Gazette* by photostat. About the same time more practical scholars began extensive efforts to make exact type-facsimiles.<sup>4</sup> Aguiló even printed with old types themselves.<sup>5</sup> The publications of the Type Facsimile Society, the Gesellschaft für Typenkunde des XV. Jahrhunderts, and of other agencies and individuals—some as offset reprints, some as photographic reproductions, and some as type-facsimiles—multiplied the number of early printed books that became generally available. A third of a century ago Margaret B. Stillwell recorded some of the more important facsimile publications, and they were impressive.<sup>6</sup>

Actually the type-facsimile has a relatively ancient history, going back to the early eighteenth century. At a meeting of the Bibliographical Society in 1926 A. W. Pollard traced the history of the genre from about 1710 on, emphasizing the special value of this technique to bibliographical scholarship.<sup>7</sup> G. R. Redgrave carried on the story into the realm of photographic facsimiles, beginning with Sir Henry James' *Report on Photo-Zincography* (1862).<sup>8</sup> R. W. Chapman described the Oxford type-facsimiles of first editions of English poetry.<sup>9</sup> He mentioned some of the advantages of the type-facsimilist over the photographer in creating a reasonable imitation of the original. He gravely advises that he had "taken such precaution as seemed practicable against the danger of fraud, which Mr. Wise has urged me not to under-estimate."<sup>10</sup> Concluding the symposium, W. W. Greg spoke rather disparagingly about the legibility of photographic facsimiles, but he admitted the need for both type and photographic facsimile.<sup>11</sup> However, in the short report of the discussion, it was clear that Stephen Gaselee, Lord Crawford, and Sir Frederic Kenyon stood firmly for the virtues of photography.

The latter gentlemen were especially impressed by collotype work, doubtless thinking of such masterpieces as the Insel-Verlag's forty-two line Bible and the Grimani Breviary. Unfortunately these facsimiles and others in their category are very expensive, and the Insel-Verlag

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B-42 is itself a crown jewel in a rare book room. The English bibliographers had not yet envisioned the large-scale production of microphotographic copies and the multiplicity of bibliographical problems to come with it.

There can be no question that reproduction of manuscripts and scarce printed books is a pious act. If there had not been complete reproductions of Abbess Herrade von Landsberg's *Hortus deliciarum* when the University of Strassburg Library burned in 1870 or of the *Heures du duc de Berry* when the library of Torino burned in 1907, these precious works would have been lost forever. In the nineteenth century considerable thought was applied to a logical policy of reproducing manuscripts. For example, in 1840 Friedrich Ritschl quite properly proposed these categories of manuscripts for reproduction: (1) manuscripts with hitherto unknown texts, (2) manuscripts in a difficult or deteriorated script; (3) manuscripts which are the only sources for certain writers; and (4) manuscripts which will always be the primary basis for certain texts.<sup>12</sup> His logic had little effect on his colleagues, although certain great series, notably the *Codices graeci et latini photographice depicti* (1897- ) and Father Ehrle's *Codices e Vaticanis selecti phototypice expressi* (1899- ), did come to pass. The Scandinavians, above all the Munksgaard firm in Copenhagen, have been singularly active in this field.

There will always be the meticulously produced facsimiles of the monumental printed books and manuscripts of the past, and it is encouraging to observe that these things are on the increase. The Book of Kells and the Lindisfarne Gospels, in facsimile, would no more affect the value of these pieces, if they were on the open market, than a Christmas card reproduction of an old master affects the value of its original. The problem with the facsimiles of cornerstone pieces is rather, how much of this sort of thing can the market bear and what standards of quality should be observed in producing them?

The less pretentious full-size facsimiles are equally innocuous as far as their effect on the market is concerned. For one thing, a large proportion of facsimiles are of *unica* or of works surviving in very few copies. The originals either do not come on the market or come so infrequently as to be prize catches in any event. Thus the "Augustan Reprints" seem to have had absolutely no effect on the value of the originals when they appear. The same thing is true of the offset reprints of scholarly works, especially German works which have become scarce (*e.g.*, the reprints of the Akademische Druck- und Ver-

lagsanstalt). The only difference here is that the paper of the modern reproduction is generally substantially better than that of the original. Anyone owning a Kuczynski in reprint would never want the newsprint original, but what dealer would be so foolish as to offer the latter?

There has never been any serious debate about the effect of full-size facsimiles on the book trade. There have been grave reservations about the effect of publication on the value of manuscripts. For minor authors there is little doubt but that the market value of manuscripts is decreased either by microfilming or by publication. It is unreasonable to pay more than a nominal price for letters of, say, Richard Harding Davis or Sarah Orne Jewett, if they have been filmed and are available to all comers. (A security film, to be used only by permission of the owner of the manuscript over a specified period of time, is a different matter.) Likewise, if material of this calibre has been competently edited, it will have less appeal to the collector than if it is unpublished.

On the other hand the sought-after and even some less important pieces are not likely to be affected either by photographic copying or by publication. The author is indebted to J. C. Wyllie for the following instructive table on the values of Thomas Jefferson letters at different times:

	<i>Market Value</i> 1930-40	<i>Market Value</i> 1940-50	<i>Market Value</i> 1950-60
Value of Dollar	100	160	200
Run-of-mine			
T.J. letter, unpublished	\$25	\$40	\$60
Another, unpublished	\$55	\$60	\$75
T.J. letter written 4 July 1776	unpublished \$2,100	same letter now published \$3,000	\$5,000

It is obvious that publication, in any form, of the cornerstone pieces simply whets the collector's appetite. Libraries are likely to be reasonably satisfied with any accurate text, but the private collector will maintain the demand for originals on all levels of importance. At times this policy on the part of libraries is not tested carefully, for microfacsimiles sometimes cost as much as a relatively inexpensive manuscript or rare book.

It is a well-nigh universal notion among dealers that microforms and the latest by-product, cheap electrostatic copying in full-size, have had little effect on the trade. At least the effect is not perceptible,

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so they say, in their dealings with knowledgeable librarians whose "inner sense of conviction seems to arrive only from primary evidence" (Bern Dibner at the meeting of the Rare Books Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries in Montréal, June 20, 1960). On the same occasion at which these golden words were uttered, Jake Zeitlin stated the case for original sources more elaborately: "Why," asks the uninformed person, 'can't we just depend upon reprints or the latest editions?' Fortunately the growth of descriptive bibliography, the development of a new method of textual research has conclusively proved the unreliability of scholarship based on facsimiles and current editions alone. The labors of McKerrow, Greg, Todd, Bowers, and others are now bearing fruit in fields other than literature. A re-examination of the texts of Galileo, for instance, may be the basis for revising our notions of what he did at the tower of Pisa."<sup>13</sup>

Some of the refinements in photography and offset printing during the last quarter of a century have mitigated somewhat a few of the strictures of W. A. Jackson in his address to the Bibliographical Society of America at Cincinnati in 1940 on "Some Limitations of Microfilm,"<sup>14</sup> but the fundamental objections to the unreliability of the photographic image as a basis for final conclusions remain. There is still the possibility of confusion such as M. H. Spielman's identification of a colon instead of a period because of the fly-speck in the Halliwell copy of the first state of the Droeshout portrait of Shakespeare. In the course of microcarding the texts of the books listed in Wagner-Camp, this author was puzzled on two occasions by supernumerary maps, in neither case described in other copies of these books. In one case the map was even drawn by the same man responsible for the frontispiece map. Inquiries at the sources revealed at once that some industrious cartographic grangerizers had been at work, and a note to this effect was inserted in the first frame of the microfacsimile. While it would increase the cost of micropublishing fantastically to hire a competent bibliographer to check each exposure, it is the solemn duty of every micropublisher and facsimile publisher to have an experienced supervising bibliographer. The latter cannot describe every item in detail and analyze each variation, but he has a sixth bibliographical sense for noting certain essential points of information.<sup>15</sup>

While reproduction techniques have improved, the development of certain new devices essentially welcome to scholars, have brought new dangers. Continuous printing from microfilm by the electrostatic

process (which will be even cheaper when the basic xerox patents expire soon) is a boon to scholars who cannot adjust themselves psychologically to the use of microforms as well as to the rest of us who like the feel of codex books. Yet the inability of xerox to reproduce continuous tone necessitates the examination of each negative to specify silver prints for exposures that do not turn out well. Failure to do this once almost had dire consequences for a vital piece of research in America's greatest business (in terms of money that changes hands), the thoroughbred industry. Two tables in *Racing Form* had bold-face numerals on past performances so distorted in a xerox enlargement as to deceive the hippic scholar completely. Fortunately, the original negative was available for correcting the electrostatic print.

If, then, there are so many dangers in the use of microfacsimiles, why do libraries, businesses (whose archives are primary sources), and individuals invest tens of millions of dollars annually in microforms? <sup>16</sup> The microform exists for three basic purposes: making scarce or hard-to-acquire (not necessarily expensive) source material generally available; preservation; and reduction of spatial needs. All three objectives are eminently legitimate and will continue to be, regardless of sentimental or psychological objections to facsimiles in reduced form. The second (preservation) is especially significant for the scholar who needs original documents. He might as well reconcile himself now to giving up certain printed works such as modern newspapers, many other books and serials published in the last century, and, *mutatis mutandis*, certain private documents, the ultimate prey of neglect, fire, water, or vermin, vis-à-vis a microfilm made by a far-sighted librarian or archivist.

The immediate purpose of most libraries for investing in microforms other than 35 mm. film of newspapers is to make hard-to-acquire source materials generally available. There is no good reason why a library should reject a text in microform if it is the only one available. We must accept what we can acquire, a fact brought home only too clearly by "paperbacks" which do not appear in "hard-cover." (And these pieces, by the way, we should film in a single master negative for the library, in defiance of all copyright, if the publisher does not issue an edition that can stand the rough-and-tumble of library circulation.) It is the responsibility of the individual scholar to ascertain the point beyond which he cannot go with the microfacsimile. He cannot expect his own library to provide him with seventy-odd First



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Folios, and he alone can decide when he can cease to depend on microforms and betake himself to the Folger.

Microforms are not cheap, especially in the bulk in which the scholar needs them. In view of the facts that they are costly, relatively little used, and secondary as scientific evidence, does each library need to own its own set of them? Or can we depend on certain central depositories such as the Midwest Inter-Library Center, which subscribes to several projects for all twenty of its members? The answer lies in the relative demand for the material, and this demand varies. We all need a film file of the *New York Times*. On the other hand, only Ohio and Kentucky libraries need a film file of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, and others can depend on interlibrary loan for this regional paper. Some libraries which support strong academic programs in French and Spanish literature need to have the microcard editions of French and Spanish drama issued by Falls City Microcards available for immediate reference, but others may depend on indefinite loan of large groups of these plays from M.I.L.C. or some neighbor. The problem of book selection cannot be escaped, even in the golden age of microforms.

What, then, is the reasonable attitude of the librarian who has all these riches at his disposal? Should he be satisfied with the microform, or should he seek the original text? Again, the answer varies with the situation. There is little point in trying to keep the complete original file of the *Patent Office Gazette* as long as we have a film and may rest secure in the knowledge that several files of the original exist, even though mutilated by oversewing and heavy trimming. A land-grant college with large responsibilities in the sciences but with eager and imaginative scholars in its English Department will have to tell the latter to be content with the microcards of, say, the Lost Cause Press' "British Culture Series" rather than investing tens of thousands in the originals. No dealer will have any trouble disposing of the few originals that turn up to libraries with primary responsibilities in eighteenth and nineteenth-century English literature.

On the other hand, a university with graduate programs or even simply undergraduate majors in English and American literature cannot be satisfied with the valiant efforts of University Microfilms or the Lost Cause Press to supply all its needs. To be sure, none of us can acquire everything in the originals, and few of us can acquire even substantial collections. But to let loose an allegedly educated man who has never handled original texts in his field is to create a

pseudo-intellectual monster. To get the brown dust of rotting spines of the *Serial Set* on your hands, to smell the mildly nauseating Soviet book cloth, or to inhale the centuries of rancid butter that permeate Tibetan block books is to have a bit of another age or culture rubbed off on you. The student who goes through his courses handling only modern editions, however accurate, and facsimiles is little better than an intellectual voyeur. He must realize that no library can be all things to all men, that he must use facsimiles and modern editions judiciously, but that he must always strive for the original texts when feasible and possible.

This is an accurate reflection of the views of most collectors, dealers, scholars, and librarians, indeed, rather a sort of *confessio fidei*. A few collectors and dealers can afford to be somewhat cavalier in their notions about microforms, but sooner or later they will realize the need for microforms if they conduct any extensive studies. Scholars, who deal in masses of material, and libraries, which deal in masses of scholars, have long since given up ideas about operating only with originals. A high official in a great continental auction house once told this writer that the microform business was "fascinating," but, he added, "I hope we never have to sell things of this sort." Six months later he wrote begging for a film of a unicum, a Harveian oration, the only one in perfect condition.

If a librarian is satisfied with any facsimile of a work that is significant in the original for any reason, he does not deserve to own the original, and he would not buy it if he had the dealer's price in his pocket. On the other hand, those librarians who appreciate the value of original texts will only be stimulated to better things if they own a microform or other facsimile of a work in a field in which they have collecting responsibilities.

### *Bibliographical Notes*

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2. One of the nine copies is Cod. lat. 12159 in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris; cf. *Acta Sanctorum*, Novembris III, 1, Vol. 63, p. lx, 1894.
3. Crous, Ernst: Faksimilia von Wiegendruckten. *Zeitschrift für Buchkunde*, 1: 148-153, 1924.
4. Stillwell, Margaret B.: *Incunabula and Americana, 1450-1800*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1931, p. 183.



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5. Haebler, Konrad: *Geschichte des Spanischen Frühdruckes in Stammbäumen*. Leipzig, K. W. Hiersemann, 1923, p. 873, note 1.
6. Stillwell, *op. cit.*, nos. 570-587 in "Reference Sections," pp. 325-327.
7. Pollard, A. W.: 'Facsimile' Reprints of Old Books. I. Preliminary Survey. *The Library*, 4th series, 6:305-313, 1926.
8. Redgrave, G. R.: Photographic Facsimiles. *The Library*, 4th series, 6:313-317, 1926.
9. Chapman, R. W.: Oxford Type-Facsimiles. *The Library*, 4th series, 6:317-321, 1926.
10. The facsimilist's first commandment, regardless of his medium, is to indicate clearly the location of the original, his permission to copy (when necessary), and the size of the original (in the case of photography, laying an inch-centimeter scale on the first page beyond the half-title). No fraud is then possible.
11. Greg, W. W.: Type-Facsimiles and Others. *The Library*, 4th series, 6:321-326, 1926.
12. Löffler, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
13. Zeitlein, Jake: Bookselling Among the Sciences. *College and Research Libraries*, 21:456, Nov. 1960.
14. Jackson, W. A.: Some Limitations of Microfilm. *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 35:281-288, First Quarter, 1941.
15. On another occasion I was able to identify a cancel on a microcard negative by referring back to the inch-centimeter ruler on the first exposure. (An unvariable rule, but one rarely observed, for microfacsimiles.) The photographer had thoughtfully and carefully—but not quite carefully enough—altered his reduction ratio to make this odd-looking page with a different size of type conform with the others.
16. Some notion of the extent of microreproduction as a small edition process for scholarly purposes may be had from Thompson, L. S.: The Microfacsimile in American Research Libraries. *Libri*, 8:209-222, 1958.